

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 6643

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR NL

SUBJECT: PROBABLE NEW DUTCH MINISTER OF DEFENSE

REF: (A) 74 THE HAGUE 5873 (B) THE HAGUE 6573

1. AS REPORTED IN REF B, STATE SECRETARY FOR DEFENSE ABRAHAM
STEMERDINK WILL MOST LIKELY BE APPOINTED AS MINISTER OF
DEFENSE IN JANUARY. THE FOLLOWING IS A SUPPLEMENT TO THE
MORE COMPLETE BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION IN REF A.

2. STEMERDINK IS AN ARDENT SOCIALIST ON DOMESTIC ISSUES
BUT IS NEVERTHELESS A STRONG BACKER OF NATO. HOWEVER, HIS
CONCERN OVER HIS STANDING WITH THE LEFT WING OF THE LABOR
PARTY EARNED HIM THE ENMITY OF A NUMBER OF CAREER MILITARY
PERSONNEL EARLY IN HIS TENURE AS STATE SECRETARY. HIS
COMPETENT PERFORMANCE AS STATE SECRETARY HAS, HOWEVER,
IMPRESSED BOTH HIS MILITARY AND CIVILIAN CRITICS WHO FIND
HIM MORE ACCEPTABLE NOW THAN IN THE PAST. STEMERDINK HAS
BEEN A STRONG PROPONENT OF DEFENSE ECONOMIES AND NATO
SPECIALIZATION. HE IS CONSIDERED MORE TECHNICALLY COMPETENT
THAN CURRENT DEFENSE MINISTER VREDELING.

3. STEMERDINK WAS BORN IN 1937, STUDIED AT THE ROYAL
MILITARY ACADEMY AT BREDA, AND SPENT 12 YEARS AS ASN ARMY
OFFICER. HE ENTERED THE SECOND CHAMBER IN 1970 AND WAS
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NAMED THE LABOR PARTY DEFENSE SPOKESMAN. HIS EVENTUAL SUCCESS,

DESPITE HIS YOUTH, WAS PARTIALLY DUE TO THE UNPARALLELED
ACCESS TO INFORMATION WHICH HE DEVELOPED. HIS MANNER IS
INFORMAL AND BUSINESS LIKE AND HE SELDOM SHRINKS FROM FRANK
CRITICISM.

4. STEMERDINK VISITED THE US RECENTLY FOR THE ROLL OUT OF
THE F-16 AT FORT WORTH. HIS SPEECH RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE
PRESS ATTENTION HERE FOR ITS COMMENTS ON THE SOCIAL COSTS
OF HEAVY DEFENSE SPENDING.
MCCLOSKEY

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